

What is claimed is:

1. A keyboard structured to be incorporated into an electronic device, the keyboard comprising:

a printed circuit board having a plurality of electrical contacts;

a primary conductor portion including a number of primary conductors, each one of said primary conductors being elastically deflectable between a relaxed position and a deflected position, each one of said primary conductors in the deflected position electrically connecting together a pair of the electrical contacts;

a secondary conductor portion including a number of secondary conductors, each one of said secondary conductors being elastically deflectable between a relaxed position and a deflected position, each one of said secondary conductors in the deflected position electrically connecting together a pair of the electrical contacts;

a number of keys, each one of said keys being cooperable with a corresponding one of said primary conductors and at least a first corresponding one of said secondary conductors;

the primary conductors and the secondary conductors being disposed between the printed circuit board and the keys; and

each one of said keys being movable between an initial position, a first terminal position, and a second terminal position, said each one of said keys in the first terminal position deflecting the corresponding one of said primary conductors to its deflected position, said each one of said keys in the second terminal position deflecting the corresponding one of said primary conductors and said at least a first corresponding one of said secondary conductors to their deflected positions.

2. The keyboard of Claim 1 wherein each one of said secondary conductors extends adjacent a plurality of the primary conductors and is said at least a first corresponding one of said secondary conductors for the keys with which said plurality of the primary conductors correspond.

3. The keyboard of Claim 2 wherein each one of said primary conductors is a dome, and each one of said secondary conductors is an elongated conductive carbon strip.

4. The keyboard of Claim 1 wherein each one of said secondary conductors extends between a pair of the primary conductors and is said at least a first corresponding one of said secondary conductors for the keys with which said pair of the primary conductors are associated.

5. The keyboard of Claim 1 wherein each one of said primary conductors is a dome, and each one of said secondary conductors is an elongated conductive carbon strip, the

primary conductor portion including a dome panel on which the domes are disposed, the secondary conductor portion including a support sheet on which the conductive carbon strips are disposed, the support sheet having a number of primary holes formed therein, the support sheet being disposed between the printed circuit board and the dome panel, the domes being at least partially receivable through the primary holes.

6. The keyboard of Claim 5 wherein the secondary conductor portion includes a spacer disposed between the support sheet and the printed circuit board, the spacer having a number of primary holes formed therein and a number of elongated secondary holes formed therein, the domes being at least partially receivable through the primary holes of the spacer, the elongated conductive carbon strips in the deflected position being at least partially receivable through the secondary holes of the spacer.

7. The keyboard of Claim 1 wherein each one of said keys is cooperable with a second corresponding one of said secondary conductors and is movable to a third terminal position, said each one of said keys in the third terminal position deflecting the corresponding one of said primary conductors and said second corresponding one of said secondary conductors to their deflected positions, said each one of said keys in the second terminal position being pivoted in a first direction away from the first terminal position, said each one of said keys in the third terminal position being pivoted in a second, different direction away from the first terminal position.

8. The keyboard of Claim 7 wherein each one of said keys includes a finger plate, a first protrusion, a second protrusion, and a third protrusion, the first, second, and third protrusions being disposed on and protruding outwardly from the finger plate, wherein when said each one of said keys is in the first terminal position the first protrusion is operatively engaged with the corresponding one of said primary conductors, wherein when said each one of said keys is in the second terminal position the first protrusion is operatively engaged with the corresponding one of said primary conductors and the second protrusion is operatively engaged with the at least a first corresponding secondary conductor, and wherein when said each one of said keys is in the third terminal position the first protrusion is operatively engaged with the corresponding one of said primary conductors and the third protrusion is operatively engaged with the second corresponding one of said secondary conductors.

9. The keyboard of Claim 8 wherein the finger plate includes a first character disposed generally centrally thereon, a second character disposed at one end thereof, and a third character at another end thereof, the first character corresponding with the first terminal

position, the second character corresponding with the second terminal position, and the third character corresponding with the third terminal position.

10. The keyboard of Claim 8 wherein the finger plate includes a first character at one end thereof and a second character at another end thereof, at least a portion of the first and second characters of the keys together being arranged in a QWERTY configuration.

11. A handheld electronic device comprising:

a keyboard;

a display positioned adjacent the keyboard;

a processor structured to receive inputs from the keyboard and to output to the display as a function of said inputs;

the keyboard including a printed circuit board, a primary conductor portion, a secondary conductor portion, and a number of keys;

the printed circuit board having a plurality of electrical contacts;

the primary conductor portion including a number of primary conductors, each one of said primary conductors being elastically deflectable between a relaxed position and a deflected position, each one of said primary conductors in the deflected position electrically connecting together a pair of the electrical contacts;

the secondary conductor portion including a number of secondary conductors, each one of said secondary conductors being elastically deflectable between a relaxed position and a deflected position, each one of said secondary conductors in the deflected position electrically connecting together a pair of the electrical contacts;

each one of said keys being cooperable with a corresponding one of said primary conductors and at least a first corresponding one of said secondary conductors;

the primary conductors and the secondary conductors being disposed between the printed circuit board and the keys; and

each one of said keys being movable between an initial position, a first terminal position, and a second terminal position, said each one of said keys in the first terminal position deflecting the corresponding one of said primary conductors to its deflected position, said each one of said keys in the second terminal position deflecting the corresponding one of said primary conductors and said at least a first corresponding one of said secondary conductors to their deflected positions.

12. The handheld electronic device of Claim 11 wherein each one of said secondary conductors extends adjacent a plurality of the primary conductors and is said at

least a first corresponding secondary conductor for the keys with which said plurality of primary conductors are associated.

13. The handheld electronic device of Claim 12 wherein each one of said primary conductors is a dome, and each one of said secondary conductors is an elongated conductive carbon strip.

14. The handheld electronic device of Claim 11 wherein each one of said secondary conductors extends between a pair of the primary conductors and is said at least a first corresponding one of said secondary conductors for the keys with which said pair of primary conductors are associated.

15. The handheld electronic device of Claim 11 wherein each one of said primary conductors is a dome, and each one of said secondary conductors is an elongated conductive carbon strip, the primary conductor portion including a dome panel on which the domes are disposed, the secondary conductor portion including a support sheet on which the conductive carbon strips are disposed, the support sheet having a number of primary holes formed therein, the support sheet being disposed between the printed circuit board and the dome panel, the domes being at least partially receivable through the primary holes.

16. The handheld electronic device of Claim 15 wherein the secondary conductor portion includes a spacer disposed between the support sheet and the printed circuit board, the spacer having a number of primary holes formed therein and a number of elongated secondary holes formed therein, the domes being at least partially receivable through the primary holes of the spacer, the elongated conductive carbon strips in the deflected position being at least partially receivable through the secondary holes of the spacer.

17. The handheld electronic device of Claim 11 wherein each one of said keys is cooperable with a second corresponding one of said secondary conductors and is movable to a third terminal position, said each one of said keys in the third terminal position deflecting the corresponding one of said primary conductors and the second corresponding one of said secondary conductors to their deflected positions, said each one of said keys in the second terminal position being pivoted in a first direction away from the first terminal position, said each one of said keys in the third terminal position being pivoted in a second, different direction away from the first terminal position.

18. The handheld electronic device of Claim 17 wherein each one of said keys includes a finger plate, a first protrusion, a second protrusion, and a third protrusion, the first, second, and third protrusions being disposed on and protruding outwardly from the finger plate, wherein when said each one of said keys is in the first terminal position the first

protrusion is operatively engaged with the corresponding one of the primary conductors, wherein when said each one of said keys is in the second terminal position the first protrusion is operatively engaged with the corresponding one of said primary conductors and the second protrusion is operatively engaged with the at least a first corresponding one of said secondary conductors, and wherein when said each one of said keys is in the third terminal position the first protrusion is operatively engaged with the corresponding one of said primary conductors and the third protrusion is operatively engaged with the second corresponding one of said secondary conductors.

19. The handheld electronic device of Claim 18 wherein the finger plate includes a first character disposed generally centrally thereon, a second character disposed at one end thereof, and a third character at another end thereof, the first character corresponding with the first terminal position, the second character corresponding with the second terminal position, and the third character corresponding with the third terminal position.

20. The handheld electronic device of Claim 18 wherein the finger plate includes a character at one end thereof and another character at another end thereof, at least a portion of the characters of the keys together being arranged in a QWERTY configuration.